

# Belling the Cat

a fable by Aesop

*Who was Aesop? We do not know for sure. We do not even know if Aesop ever really lived. Many people think that he did live. They believe that he lived in Greece. They believe that Aesop was a very wise man. They say he made up fables. A fable is a very short story that teaches a lesson. Aesop told the fables to people. Later, people wrote down Aesop's stories.*

*Aesop's fables are very, very old. They may be more than 2,000 years old. But people still enjoy these stories today. Aesop's fables always end with a lesson. The stories teach something. Maybe that is why people like them so much.*

*"Belling the Cat" is one of Aesop's most famous stories. Look for the lesson at the end of the fable.*

Years ago, many mice lived in a big house. The mice lived a good life. It was warm in the house. It was dry in the house. There was always a lot of food around.

An old man and his wife lived in the house. They did not mind the mice. They did not care about the mice.

The mice did what they wanted to do. They ran up and down the stairs. They went into all the rooms. They were not afraid of anything. Nobody ever bothered them.

Things went on this way for many years. The mice were very happy. They loved living in the house.

Then one day something happened. The man and his wife got a pet. The pet was a cat.



Well! Life suddenly changed for the mice. It was not a change for the better. The cat was very big and very clever. It moved quietly about. It did not make a sound. It moved very quickly. Then suddenly it jumped. It caught a mouse.

Day after day, the cat caught mice. The mice were afraid all the time.

At last a few mice said, "It is time to do something. Let us hold a meeting. All the mice must come. We will talk about the cat. Maybe we can think of a way to save ourselves."

**Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 3**  
**LA.3.2.2.1 Form A**



The mice held a big meeting. All the mice were there. They talked about what to do. Some of the mice had ideas. But none of the ideas seemed very good.

Then a young mouse spoke up. He said, "The problem is this. The cat is very quiet. We cannot tell where he is or when he is coming. But I have a plan. It is a very good plan. It will save us from the cat."

All the mice sat up. They listened with great interest.

"It's very simple," said the young mouse. "We must tie a bell around the cat's neck. When we hear the bell ring, we will know that the cat is near. Then we can run away. The cat will not catch us."

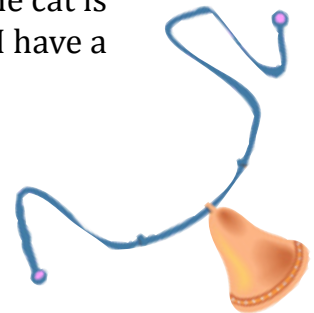
"That is a great idea!" shouted the mice. "The bell will tell us that the cat is near."

The mice clapped their paws. They cried out, "We are saved! We are saved!"

Then an old mouse stood up. "Excuse me, please," he said. "That sounds like a very fine plan. But before we clap and cheer, please tell me this. Which mouse will tie the bell on the cat?"

The mice looked at each other. They were silent. No one said a word. You could not hear a mouse squeak.

Then the old mouse said, "There is a lesson here. The lesson is this: *Some things are easier said than done.*"



All the mice agreed with the idea of "belling the cat" (putting a bell around the cat's neck).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 3</b> <b>LA.3.2.2.1 Form A</b></p>
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**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read the passage and choose the correct answer.

1. Which sentences from the story BEST describe what is happening in the illustration on page 2?
  - A. Then an old mouse stood up. "Excuse me, please," he said.
  - B. The mice looked at each other. They were silent.
  - C. No one said a word. You could not hear a mouse squeak.
  - D. The mice clapped their paws. They cried out, "We are saved! We are saved!"
  
2. The purpose of the dark text box on page 2 is to explain
  - A. what "belling the cat" means.
  - B. why the mice needed a good plan.
  - C. how to put a bell around the neck of a cat.
  - D. why the mice agreed to put a bell on the cat.
  
3. The purpose of the section in italics at the beginning of the story is to
  - A. explain that a fable is a very old story.
  - B. give readers information about the author and his stories.
  - C. prove that the author of the story was a real person.
  - D. tell why Aesop wrote the story about putting a bell on a cat.
  
4. The last sentence in the story is in italics to show the reader
  - A. the old mouse was speaking loudly.
  - B. the lesson to be learned from the story.
  - C. the cat was listening to the mice speak.
  - D. the mice needed to come up with a better plan.

**Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 3**  
**LA.3.2.2.1 Form A**

**ANSWER KEY**

1. Which sentences from the story BEST describe what is happening in the illustration on page 2?

- A. **Then an old mouse stood up. “Excuse me, please,” he said.**
- B. The mice looked at each other. They were silent.
- C. No one said a word. You could not hear a mouse squeak.
- D. The mice clapped their paws. They cried out, “We are saved! We are saved!”

2. The purpose of the dark text box on page 2 is to explain

- A. **what “belling the cat” means.**
- B. why the mice needed a good plan.
- C. how to put a bell around the neck of a cat.
- D. why the mice agreed to put a bell on the cat.

Item #	Answer
1.	A
2.	A
3.	B
4.	B

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